



The Comptroller General
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20548

Decision

Matter of: Judith A. Holm - Claim for Cost of Exchanging
Airline Tickets

File: B-230371

Date: April 5, 1988

DIGEST

An employee, who exchanged her airline ticket in order to catch an earlier flight from temporary duty, may not be reimbursed the \$50 fee. The additional expense may be allowed under para. 1-3.4c of the Federal Travel Regulations only when it is more advantageous to the government.

DECISION

This decision is in response to a voucher submitted by Ms. Judith A. Holm, a Department of Energy employee,^{1/} in which she claims an additional \$50 cost incurred by her when she altered her travel schedule so as to return to her duty station earlier than planned after completion of her temporary duty assignment.

Briefly stated, the facts are that Ms. Holm was furnished a round-trip ticket on Northwest Airlines for travel from Chicago, Illinois, to Knoxville, Tennessee, and return at a cost of \$492. The meeting she was attending in Knoxville ended earlier than expected so she decided to leave Knoxville at 12:35 p.m. aboard Eastern Airlines for her return travel home rather than wait for her later scheduled flight on Northwest Airlines which would depart Knoxville at 3:05 p.m. Ms. Holm went to the airport and exchanged her return ticket for a flight on Eastern Airlines, but this exchange of tickets cost an additional \$50.

The agency denied Ms. Holm's request for reimbursement on the basis of the small time differential between her scheduled arrival at Chicago on Northwest (5:25 p.m.) and the scheduled arrival on the Eastern flight (3:15 p.m.).

^{1/} The question was presented by an authorized certifying officer, Chicago Regional Office, Department of Energy.

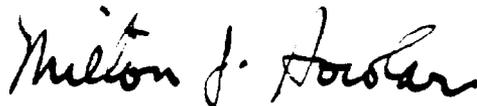
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The agency stated that a prudent person would not have incurred this additional expense based on such a short time period.

We agree with the contention that Ms. Holm should not be reimbursed because the Federal Travel Regulations^{2/} preclude such reimbursement under the circumstances presented. Paragraph 1-3.4c of the FTR provides that when common carriers furnish the same method of travel at different fares between the same points for the same type of accommodations, the lowest cost service shall be used unless use of a higher-cost service is administratively determined to be more advantageous to the government.

We have held that under these provisions of the regulations, an employee must bear the added expense of higher-cost airline tickets purchased to obtain an earlier return than scheduled from a temporary duty assignment, in the absence of an agency determination that the higher-cost service is more advantageous to the government. Dr. Francis G. Stehli, B-225352, Sept. 21, 1987; B-179696, Mar. 18, 1974. See also 26 Comp. Gen. 787 (1947). Since Ms. Holm would have traveled during her regular duty hours on either flight, since she could not have arrived back at the office prior to the end of her workday, and since no per diem costs were saved, these facts would seem to militate against a finding that use of the higher-cost service was more advantageous to the government.

Accordingly, we conclude that the employee's claim must be denied.



Acting Comptroller General
of the United States

^{2/} FTR (Supp. 5, June 19, 1983,) incorp. by ref., 41 C.F.R. § 101-7.003 (1985).